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ABSTRACT

An automated service center was established to assist in developing improved and extended instructional materials services for all teachers and students in the public and private schools of an eleven county area in New York state through offering coordinated and automated purchasing, cataloging and processing of all forms of instructional materials; and by providing bibliographic and information retrieval services, inservice workshops, consultant services, and examination and in-depth circulation, collections and production of locally needed instructional materials. This document is the final report of that project and contains the following: an evaluation (summary of findings), statement of the problem, program to solve the problem, data analysis, the findings of the project, and conclusions and recommendations. A list of the school districts that used the regional center services from 1968-1971 is included.
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REGIONAL CENTER

FOR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS SERVICES

Final Project Report
Project SED 620-3
Elementary and Secondary Education Act
Title III

Submitted by
City School District
City of Schenectady, New York
July 26, 1971

LI 004 406

PART II, EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. School library services on a multi-district and cross-county level can be implemented. The success of such regionalized services depends primarily upon two factors: (1) the recognition by individual school librarians of common services or technical operations that can effectively be performed regionally and (2) the ability of the regional service center to provide rapid and expert service.
2. Interest in regional cooperation for library or instructional materials services continues to develop in the area served by this project. However, the types of service and the levels of participation in the services need careful study and continual redefinition.
3. The primary service of this project, that of acquisition, cataloging and processing of instructional materials for school libraries, is feasible for computerized operations similar to those designed in this project if there is an annual minimum volume of 200,000 items. With this volume, the rate of duplication of cataloged titles for school libraries would approximate ninety percent, and the total cost per item based on today's standard would be favorably compared to that now offered by the larger commercial cataloging firms.
4. The problems inherent in establishing processing centers and developing computerized programs deter interest of school librarians in participating in such a project during the developmental period. Prior to offering service to schools, insufficient time was available for setting up operational routines, for training personnel, for designing and implementing computer programs and for establishing

the necessary cataloging files, all of which are vital components of the fast and expert service expected by participating school librarians. A fourth year would have enabled the center to see all sub-systems of the computer design fully operational, an established cataloging authority file of over 35,000 items of book and non-book material, and another 25 - 40% growth in the monthly output of processed items. The project staff feel that a minimum of four years would be necessary to fully implement a totally automated library processing center.

5. A significant factor in the growth of regional library services is that of cost. Free services provided by the center were abundantly used. Processing services were not used by several participants because of budgetary limitations. Several school districts in the area served by the project had no library budgets at times. Planning for future cooperative efforts should include some guarantee of adequate funding to operate the project during the initial period of development.
6. This project did not determine the direct effect of regional library processing upon the improvement of educational programs in the area served. However, many indications of the positive value of several services provided by project personnel are felt to have indirectly contributed to improved programs.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The project originally attempted to establish and operate a library service center to perform the following activities that would help cope with the need for instructional material services in the designated eleven county region:

1. Order, catalog, and process books for school library material centers in the eleven-county region surrounding the Capital District of New York State.
2. Order and catalog non-book materials such as films, filmstrips, and phonograph records. Other materials would be added after the Center had demonstrated its ability to cope with the items specified.
3. Prepare book catalogs for three school districts in the area, listing holdings contained on magnetic tape or disc. This portion of the program would be a demonstration sub-project which could be expanded when its worth had been demonstrated.
4. Purchase periodicals for the schools in the eleven-county area which participate in the program, placing buying lists on magnetic tape and using this same input to prepare a Union List of serials.
5. Establish and operate a book examination center, with appropriate books and bibliographic tools. In conjunction with this service, a consultant would be available to the schools to assist with book selection and other areas related to their materials service centers.

After the experience of the first six months of operation, the need was apparent to focus primary attention on the development of the automated processing service (items 1 and 2 above) and effectively establish that service as the major contribution of the center.

ATTACKING THE PROBLEM

Immediately after funding on March 1, 1968, staff was hired and trained, procedures of operation were established, a standardized cataloging code for books was developed through small committee and large group meetings of area librarians, the physical facility was planned, equipment was purchased, contracts were made to begin the systems analysis, producers of instructional materials were contacted to contribute to the examination center, a regional advisory cabinet was established, and informational meetings with superintendents and librarians were held to disseminate information regarding the proposed activities of the project.

The project was funded three months later than the date originally anticipated, therefore the organizational period (which was to consist of the initial six months of the project) was necessarily shortened. However, contracts were drawn to begin the acquisition and processing services on July 1, 1968. Several thousand books needing cataloging were obtained immediately upon funding from three school districts as recommended by personnel in the U. S. Office of Education. This immediate backlog of older titles to be catalogued proved not to be in the best interest of the center's service.

Activities Employed

1. Book processing began with manual procedures and were gradually replaced by automated routines throughout the entire project period. Toward the end of the second year of operation,

automated procedures for the acquisition and processing of non-book materials began and continued for the remainder of the project. All sub-systems of the automated routines were never fully operational during the project period.

2. The book and non-book examination center was established immediately after funding and provided review and selection services throughout the entire project period. This collection was greatly enhanced by ESEA II Special Purpose Grant designed primarily to provide information retrieval services for resource materials stored on microfilm for secondary social studies programs. The examination center and indepth collection of ESEA II materials became the most favorable aspect of the center's services.
3. In conjunction with the examination center in the first year of the project, a consultant provided workshops for librarians and assistance with selection of materials. Three other workshops were held, several bibliographies were prepared, meetings were held to discuss problems, library aides were trained, graphics and production services were offered, and individual consulting services were provided throughout the remaining project period, even though the consultant position was eliminated after the first year.

Collection of Data

The following methods were employed to collect data related to the progress in achieving project objectives:

Evaluation team from Arthur D. Little, Inc. Cambridge, Mass.

To determine the feasibility of computer design and the center's total progress in the initial period.

Monthly reports from programming staff

To report progress on implementation of computerized system.

Small group meetings

To seek assistance in identifying and solving problems related to the development of the center.

Large group meeting of librarians participating in the project

To determine continued interest in regional cooperation.

Questionnaires to participants and visits to participating libraries

To determine values of center services, problems related to participation, effectiveness of circulating collection of materials etc.

Meetings of center staff

To continually assess development of project, analyse problems, promote better service.

Study conducted by SUNYA library student - Mrs. Jean Sampson

To survey the attitudes of school librarians toward centralized services.

ANALYZING THE DATA

1. To determine the success of the project in implementing its primary service, that of the ordering, cataloging, and processing service for book and non-book materials, a questionnaire was distributed to users of this service. Representative responses were:

81% of participating librarians found the cataloging code adequate for their needs and a high degree of consistency in using the code.

84% felt that the Regional Center more completely filled orders than usual vendors.

Only 46% felt that the time between the ordering and receipt of materials had decreased over the project period.

However, 71% indicated that regional cooperation in the processing of materials was of professional benefit to the schools served.

The staff also continually appraised the progress of the center toward this basic objective. Their basic concerns follow:

The cataloging backlog continued to decrease throughout the period but always remained an obstacle to efficient service.

The development of the automated system was constantly behind schedule.

More requests for service were sought than could be adequately handled by the number of staff employed.

2. To determine the success of the project in providing services related to the examination center and collection of materials, a questionnaire was distributed to users of this service. Representative responses revealed:

Filmstrips and sound filmstrips were borrowed more frequently than records, books, kits, pictures and transparencies.

80% of the borrowers of the materials were teachers.

More than 200 individuals visited the center to borrow materials, and additional requests were received in over 420 letters and 450 telephone calls.

Circulation of materials to schools numbered 4,000+. In addition 900+ microfilmed articles were retrieved and sent to schools.

However, 38% of the users surveyed indicated they had insufficient knowledge of the collection of materials in the examination center.

Through meetings and information discussions with users of the service the following factors were apparent:

The collection of materials should be expanded.

More personnel should be devoted to implementing this service to meet the demands.

The service should be more widely publicized for maximum utilization.

3. To determine the extent of interest in future regional cooperation for materials services and the continuance of the processing service beyond the end of the project period, data was collected through discussion groups at general meetings, through questionnaires, and from statements by superintendents regarding their intent to participate in 1971-72. Responses indicated:

82% of present participants favor continued regional cooperation.

78% would actively endeavor to continue using the processing service after project expiration.

Only 46% of librarians responding would use the center for all of its processing needs.

Group discussions pinpointed the need for other regional services e.g.:

Continue and expand non-book processing

Expand non-book loan collection

Provide traveling examination services to outlying areas

Have textbooks available for examination

Initiate ordering and processing of periodicals

Sponsor workshops at the regional level

4. In the fall of 1970, an intensive study based primarily on this project was conducted by Mrs. Jean Sampson, a graduate student in library science at the State University of New York at Albany, to determine the attitudes of area school librarians toward centralized services. Conclusions and recommendations found by this study were:

"There is a definite need for materials loan services or a 'sharing of resources' plan to be developed."

"It is difficult for many (librarians) to change from their established system at all, and if changes are made they will not accept any imperfections in a new system (of library processing)."

"Future regional cataloging and processing should be started and maintained on a small scale until the center is fully equipped to handle its business quickly and efficiently."

FINDINGS

Immediate

1. The need still exists for coordinated instructional materials services in the area served by this project:
 - a) Acquisition and processing services continue to be a basic need particularly when a school district receives special ESEA II funds and does not have adequate staff to process the unusually large volume of materials purchased that year. However, dissatisfaction exists with the slowness of this service and consequently many schools have not participated.
 - b) The availability of materials to implement programs of study is still limited, and the need exists for more inter-organizational sharing. The collection of materials in the examination center and the Special Purpose ESEA II collection has been well used by many schools. However, the demands for materials far exceed the project's capacity to give effective service.
 - c) The need for regionally provided materials services has recently intensified in the area of non-book materials. Graphics services, instructional television utilization and technical assistance, regional film libraries, information retrieval systems etc. presently carry more concern than the more traditional services related to the acquisition and cataloging of book materials.
 - d) Workshops and in-service activities continue to be needed to update and supplement the skills of the personnel involved in materials services, and to assist them in the recognition of common goals. More interaction among library personnel continues to be a need to help expand present horizons of service.

2. A common cataloging code can be established for use by students of all grade levels. However, the code that adequately classifies high school collections is frequently over detailed for elementary school use. The use of the MARC II tape produced by Library of Congress was not tried in this project, but the cataloging code so established by the Center would facilitate the use of the MARC tape in the future. A few individual school librarians were unwilling to accept the Regional Center's cataloging code as it differed from that used in their library.
3. The use of automation (refer to LARC Report, June 1970) as designed for this project, is practicable for the acquisition, cataloging, and processing of library materials provided there is sufficient volume to warrant the expenditure. Minimum annual volume needed for economical computer costs is estimated at 200,000 items. This project, originally proposed as a pilot center for a New York State Network of similar school library processing centers, has found that such a network, if ever established, should definitely computerize routines of library technical services.
4. Throughout the three year period, the Regional Center was unable to process the total number of volumes anticipated. The staff, ever aware of the need to shorten the time lag between the ordering and receipt of materials, worked tirelessly to complete all processing by the end of the project period. The factors contributing to the slowness of service were:
 - a) There was a heavy build up of cataloging backlog inasmuch as no established cataloging authority files were developed prior to offering cataloging service to schools at the beginning of the

project. (By the end of the project cataloging had been established on approximately 28,000 items of book and non-book material and two of every three new items received was a duplicate item with cataloging already established. Therefore, in the final budget period approximately four times the number of items were processed as in the first budget period) Cataloging backlog was continuous throughout the project period, but lightened considerably each year as files were established.

- b) The design of the computer program was completed on schedule but the programming, debugging, and utilization of programs was accomplished at a much slower rate than anticipated. Change in programming personnel, difficulty in arranging time on the computer, faulty input, utilization of programs before fully complete etc. contributed problems that prevented more rapid processing service.
- c) The staff was unable to cope with the heavy work load that began initially and never ceased during the project period. Limited funds prevented employment of extra catalogers to keep up with cataloging needs, and for clerical personnel to keep on top when peak work loads of typing cards, printing and assembling sets of catalog cards, searching for established cataloging, unpacking materials, verifying and correcting computer records, billing schools, paying vendors and other such work related to the operation of the project seemed unsurmountable.

5. From data gathered in questionnaires and interviews, it has been found that librarians using a processing service are able to provide more individual assistance to students and can interact more frequently

with teachers than when they performed the processing function themselves. However, no determination could be made that the processing service provided by the Regional Center was more directly beneficial to the improvement of library services to students than processing performed centrally in a school district or obtained from commercial sources. The processing done by the project is estimated to have released area librarians from processing routines for a total of forty six thousand hours of time that may be used to provide more effective library services to students and teachers.

Other services provided by the center, such as workshops, training of library aides, assisting with the design of new library facilities, providing bibliographies, and the circulation of materials to teachers are considered to have a positive value indirectly influencing the quality of educational offerings and the level of pupil achievement. No documentation other than generalized statements by teaching personnel is available to substantiate the direct effect of these services on the instructional program.

Related to Total Project Costs

- 1.. A full year of operation subsequent to the completion and successful utilization of all computer programs is needed to adequately determine costs of computer applications to this library processing project. Due to the pressures to complete all work by the end of the project period, the time needed to refine computer operations for maximum efficiency was phased out. Cost estimates of computer services in the final budget period approximated 87 cents per processed item.
2. The costs of operating a regional library processing center with a completely automated system for acquisitions, cataloging and processing are excessive without a minimum volume of 200,000 items. The

lower the cost per processed item. The by-products of the computer system can provide additional information services that are beneficial to the area served. Such by-products may include a union list of holdings or other features of bibliographical retrieval.

3. The total project budget was insufficient to permit implementation of all activities designed in the original proposal. As costs of operation increased each year, the staff was reduced and priority was placed upon the processing service for book and non-book materials for which contractual agreements with school districts had been made. At the end of the project period it was determined that it was impossible to phase the total project over to local support. However, operation of the processing center without computer applications will continue in the future.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Outcomes

1. Considerable interest has been shown in the project by those in the library profession seeking the utilization of automation for library technical services. The full description of the computer design found in the LARC Report, June 1970, has brought queries from many states and visitors from Washington D.C., Michigan, and Canada. The logic in the design of the project will be beneficial to other library groups anticipating the utilization of tape and disc retrieval of acquisition and cataloging information for processing centers.
2. The project will continue for the 1971-72 school year on a smaller scale, sponsored by the Schenectady City School District and supported by anticipating school districts through the assistance of their local Board of Cooperative Educational Services. The anticipated volume of items to be processed in the coming school year is twenty thousand. The free services previously available to anyone in the area served by the project, will continue to be available only to those districts participating in the processing service.

Dropped or Modified Features of the Original Plan

1. The automated system in the original proposal covered only the basic elements for acquisition and accounting procedures based on the 80 column computer card. The procedure was outdated by the time the project was funded as newer methods for capturing information via the magnetic tape encoder seemed the more desirable route to follow. Advice to design a total system to include cataloging and by-products of cataloging output was heeded. As a result the computer system designed

far exceeded original proposal expectations.

2. During the first year of operation, it was decided that funding available would not be sufficient for experimentation with a computerized book catalog for three selected school districts. The decision to begin the cataloging of non-book items was postponed until well into the second year of operation as emphasis was placed on improving the book processing service. The purchase of periodicals for libraries and development of a union list of periodicals was never attempted due to the excessive work load on available staff.
3. The demonstration collection proposed originally was not funded. However, through ESEA II a special collection of materials was purchased for secondary school social studies programs. This collection was highly used.

Recommendations for Others With Similar Needs

1. Allow sufficient time to establish authority files, develop computer programs, etc. prior to making commitments for services.
2. Build upon existing systems for technical services to meet school library needs. A network of such centers could evolve that may share cataloging data, evaluation of materials, information retrieval techniques etc. for benefits to all.
3. Attempt to redesign cataloging procedures to make them more adaptable for automated routines and still remain functionally acceptable for library purposes.
4. Computerized services with the high level of sophistication developed by this project should not be attempted without the volume of work to make automated applications economically feasible.

Requirements for Most Successful Implementation of Project

1. Close communication between a regional center and the participating librarians is a definite requirement for successful implementation. Newsletters and other promotional and public relations aids alone are inadequate. Personal visits, conferences etc. are vital to develop understanding.
2. The greater the involvement of the participants in determining procedures of operation, services to be offered, etc. the greater the commitment to the project. A high degree of commitment may offset the initial discouragement resulting from slowness of service.
3. The single most important criteria relating to the success or failure of a processing center is the time period between the ordering of materials and the receipt of the processed materials in the library. The shorter the time span, the higher degree of success of the center. The primary requirements to successfully shorten the time span are an adequate number of well trained, highly motivated, and dedicated staff to prevent the build up of a backlog of work, and effective operational procedures to guarantee efficient acquisition and movement of materials.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS USING REGIONAL CENTER SERVICES
1968-71

Academy of Holy Names	Albany, N.Y.
Albany Public Schools	Albany, N.Y.
Averill Park Central Schools	Averill Park, N.Y.
Berkshire Farm for Boys	New Canaan, N.Y.
Berne-Knox Central Schools	Berne, N.Y.
Bethlehem Central School District	Delmar, N.Y.
Bishop Gibbons High School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Bishop Scully School	Amsterdam, N.Y.
Broadalbin Central Schools	Broadalbin, N.Y.
Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools	Burnt Hills, N.Y.
Cambridge Central Schools	Cambridge, N.Y.
Canajoharie Central Schools	Canajoharie, N.Y.
Cardinal McCloskey High School	Albany, N.Y.
Catskill Central Schools	Catskill, N.Y.
Chatham Central Schools	Chatham, N.Y.
Christ the King School	Albany, N.Y.
Christian Brothers Academy	Albany, N.Y.
Cohoes School System	Cohoes, N.Y.
Colonie Central School District #1	Albany, N.Y.
Corinth Central School	Corinth, N.Y.
Darrow School	New Lebanon, N.Y.
Draper Union Free School District #14	Schenectady, N.Y.
East Greenbush Central Schools	East Greenbush, N.Y.
Fort Ann Central Schools	Fort Ann, N.Y.
Fort Edward Union Free School District #1	Fort Edward, N.Y.
Germantown Central School District #2	Germantown, N.Y.
Glens Falls City Schools	Glens Falls, N.Y.
Gloversville Enlarged School District	Gloversville, N.Y.
Granville Central School District #1	Granville, N.Y.
Greater Amsterdam School System	Amsterdam, N.Y.
Greenville Central Schools	Greenville, N.Y.
Greenwich Central Schools	Greenwich, N.Y.
Guilderland Central Schools	Guilderland, N.Y.
Hoosick Valley Central School	Schaghticoke, N.Y.
Hudson Falls Central School District	Hudson Falls, N.Y.
Hudson School System	Hudson, N.Y.
Hunter-Tannersville Central School	Tannersville, N.Y.
Immaculate Conception School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Johnsburg Central School	North Creek, N.Y.
Kenwood Academy	Albany, N.Y.
Keveny Memorial Academy	Cohoes, N.Y.
Little Falls City Central Schools	Little Falls, N.Y.
Maria College	Albany, N.Y.
Marylrose Academy	Albany, N.Y.
Mayfield Central Schools	Mayfield, N.Y.
Mechanicville Public Schools	Mechanicville, N.Y.
New Lebanon Central School	Lebanon Springs, N.Y.
Niskayuna Public Schools	Schenectady, N.Y.
Northville Central Schools	Northville, N.Y.
Notre Dame High School	Schenectady, N.Y.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS USING REGIONAL CENTER SERVICES
1968-71

Our Lady of Mount Carmel School	Amsterdam, N.Y.
Our Lady of Mount Carmel School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Queensbury Union Free School District #2	Glens Falls, N.Y.
Rensselaer City School District	Rensselaer, N.Y.
Richmondville Central School	Richmondville, N.Y.
Saint Adalbert School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint Ambrose School	Latham, N.Y.
Saint Anthony School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint Casimer School	Albany, N.Y.
Saint Clement School	Saratoga Springs, N.Y.
Saint Columba School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint James School	Albany, N.Y.
Saint John the Evangelist School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint Joseph School	Fort Edward, N.Y.
Saint Luke's School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint Mary's School	Glens Falls, N.Y.
Saint Mary's School	Gloversville, N.Y.
Saint Mary's School	Hudson, N.Y.
Saint Mary's School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint Mary's School	Troy, N.Y.
Saint Patrick's Parish School	Catskill, N.Y.
Saint Paul the Apostle School	Schenectady, N.Y.
Saint Paul the Assumption School	Mechanicville, N.Y.
Saratoga Springs City Schools	Saratoga Springs, N.Y.
Schenectady Public Schools	Schenectady, N.Y.
Schodack Central School	Castleton-on-Hudson, N.Y.
Scotia-Glenville Central Schools	Scotia, N.Y.
Shenendehowa Central Schools	Elnora, N.Y.
South Glens Falls Central Schools	South Glens Falls, N.Y.
Taconic Hills Central Schools	Hillsdale, N.Y.
Vincentian Institute	Albany, N.Y.
Voorheesville Central Schools	Voorheesville, N.Y.
Watervliet School System	Watervliet, N.Y.
Wheelerville Union Free School	Caroga Lake, N.Y.
Whitehall Central Schools	Whitehall, N.Y.